

FORGETFULNESS

Arizona Department of Corrections
Health Services Bureau

Inmate Wellness Program
HEP 1047 - Revised 07/08

Is it normal to become a little forgetful as I get older?

Occasional memory lapses are very common as people get older. Because of the way the brain stores information, it is often easier to remember events that happened long ago or things that happened a couple of days ago than something that happened just a few minutes ago.

What are some causes of memory problems?

Forgetfulness need not be considered a problem unless it is getting progressively worse or unless it is affecting your ability to live your normal daily life.

Many things other than aging can cause memory problems, including depression, other illnesses, dementia (severe problems with memory and thinking, such as Alzheimer's disease), side effects of drugs, strokes, a head injury and alcoholism.

Memory problems that aren't part of normal aging:

- Forgetting things much more often than you used to
- Forgetting how to do things you've done many times before
- Trouble learning new things
- Repeating phrases or stories in the same conversation
- Trouble making choices or managing your inmate account
- Not being able to keep track of what happens each day

How can I tell if my memory problems are serious?

A memory problem is serious when it affects your daily living. If you sometimes forget names, you're probably okay. However, you may have a more serious problem if you have trouble remembering how to do tasks you've done many times before, getting to a place you've been to often, or doing things that use steps, like following a recipe.

Normal memory problems and dementia differ in that dementia gets much worse over several months to several years.

It may be hard to figure out on your own if you have a serious problem. Talk to your health care staff about any concerns you have. They may be able to help you evaluate your memory problems.

